

RECOMMENDATION TO REVISE THE MEMBER APPOINTMENT PROCESS

Background

The work of the DOE-EM Site-Specific Advisory Board (EM SSAB) is in support of Department of Energy (DOE) programmatic missions focused on environmental cleanup of post-war nuclear and chemical contamination. At each of our respective sites, that work has been substantially and adversely impacted over the course of the past few years, in part, because of the length of time it is now taking to get appointment letters approved for individual Board members to participate. It has hamstrung Board abilities, at each site, to fulfill DOE goals for development and incorporation of public policy advice concerning the nature of cleanup and many other issues. For example, often potential members apply and later withdraw their applications due to extended delays in the appointment process. Boards have had to delay providing advice or recommendations due to a lack of membership, coupled with the loss of Board or Committee chair leadership while they wait for appointment approval. Reduced Board membership has also limited the development of institutional knowledge, so necessary at sites whose cleanup missions will extend decades into the future. In some cases, experienced and informed members are handicapped by a year or longer gap between their terms because they lack the special and immediate access to information on emerging issues that active members receive. More significantly, the extended approval process, which has often resulted in depleted Board rosters, has reduced Board legitimacy, and eroded public confidence in the DOE, including attracting complaints from community organizations and negative media coverage.

Examples of negative impacts specific to each site are attached to this recommendation.

Recommendation

The EM Site-Specific Advisory Board (EM SSAB) believes that the Department of Energy (DOE) should substantially revise the membership approval process to ensure that the continuity of Board and Committee activities is protected and remains intact such that there is no disruption of stakeholder involvement and input as per each Board's respective chartering agreements and operating rules.

While the larger effort to comprehensively revise the SSAB membership approval process is pursued by the Designated Federal Officer for the EM SSAB and in order to further enable stakeholder participation at their respective sites during this endeavor, the EM SSAB recommends:

1. The membership review and approval process should include all reasonable activities necessary to prevent lapsed memberships. A lapsed membership is defined as: a membership held by a member in good standing whose term has expired but has not reached the six-year limit.
2. The site manager should be empowered to temporarily extend the terms of lapsed members in good standing or to temporarily appoint other qualified members to replace lapsed members until a new membership package is approved.¹
3. The DOE should publish the review and appointment process and then take feedback from the public and EM SSAB members. The published information should identify which elements are required by the Federal Advisory Committee Act, the General Services Administration, and the EM SSAB charter, and which elements are internal to the DOE, as well as where those DOE policies and procedures can be found.

¹ For a related authority see the DOE EM SSAB Policies and Procedures Desk Reference (June 2013), Section III.C on "Delegated Authority to the Field for Member Appointments."